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Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 07707 271928Z

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ACTION EUR-12

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---------- 078242
R 271818Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1303

S E C R E T ROME 7707

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FOR ROBERT BARBOUR, EUR/WE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, IT
SUBJECT: PROPOSED US NAVY MOVES AFFECTING ITALY - CTF 60

REFS: A) CINCUSNAVEUR 171632Z MAY 75; B) ROME 7562

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE WAS SENT FROM ADMIRAL SHEAR TO ADMIRAL HOLLOWAY, WITH AN INFO COPY TO AMBASSADOR VOLPE. IT IS REPEATED FOR YOUR INFORMATION.

1. (S) ON MAY 15 I PAID FAREWELL CALL ON AMBASSADOR VOLPE IN ROME AND DISCUSSED PROPOSED U.S. NAVY MOVES AND THEIR POSSIBLE IMPACT ON ITALY. THE PRIMARY ISSUE WAS THE STATUS OF CTF 60 (COMMANDER CARRIER GROUP TWO) AND THE NAVY'S DESIRE TO MOVE THE HOMEPORT OF CTF 60 AND STAFF FROM ATHENS TO ITALY. I REVIEWED THE CURRENT STATUS OF CTF 60 AND THE OPTIONS THAT WERE AVAILABLE TO US. WE ALSO DISCUSSED THE MOVE OF VR-24 FROM NAPLES TO SIGONELLA.

2. (S) CTF 60: I NOTED TO AMBASSADOR VOLPE THAT AS A RESULT OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GREEK GOVERNMENT THE FIVE REMAINING DESTROYERS HOMEPORTED IN ATHENS WOULD BE RETURNING TO THE U.S. BETWEEN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR. THEIR REPLACEMENTS WOULD NOT BE HOMEPORTED IN THE MED, BUT WOULD ROTATE BETWEEN CONUS AND SIXTHFLT. I EXPLAINED THAT THE STATUS OF CTF 60 AND STAFF, NOW HOMEPORTED IN ATHENS, WAS UNRESOLVED. WHILE IT HAD
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 ROME 07707 271928Z

NOT COME UP DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS IN ATHENS, IT WOULD HAVE

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

TO BE MOVED. AFTER REVIEWING THE OPTIONS OF ROTATING CTF 60
AND STAFF, AS WE WILL THE DESTROYERS, WE HAD CONCLUDED THAT THIS
WAS FAR FROM SATISFACTORY. WE NEEDED THE CONTINUITY IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN OF AN EXPERIENCED STAFF AND TASK FORCE COMMANDER,
PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE CONTINUING UNSETTLED SITUATION IN
THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN. I THEN EXPLAINED THAT FOR US, THE
BEST SOLUTION WOULD BE TO MOVE CTF 60 AND STAFF TO ITALY, EITHER
TO NAPLES OR GAETA. I CITED THE REASONS FOR NAPLES BEING THE
MORE ATTRACTIVE OF THE TWO, BOTH FOR THE STAFF THAT WOULD BE
EMBARKED AND FOR THE CARRIER IN WHICH THE STAFF WOULD BE EMBARKED.

3. (S) I EMPHASIZED THAT HOMEPORTING CTF 60 IN NAPLES WOULD
RESULT IN NO PERCEPTIBLE CHANGE IN THE PATTERN OF OUR OPERATIONS.
THE CITY ALREADY IS A MAJOR PORT FOR CARRIER VISITS AND THE
PRESENCE OF OTHER STAFFS IN THE AREA ASSURES THE AVAILABILITY
OF SUPPORT FACILITIES. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CTF 60 PERSONNEL
WAS 46; THE NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS WOULD PROBABLY TOTAL BETWEEN
75-100. THUS, WE WERE TALKING ABOUT A TOTAL INFLUX INTO THE
NAPLES AREA OF 125-150; A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER THAT SHOULD
HAVE ONLY MINOR IMPACT.

4. (S) I NOTED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE
THE MOVE IN THE JULY-AUGUST TIME FRAME. IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT
TO SETTLE THE DEPENDENTS IN ITALY BEFORE THE START OF THE SCHOOL
YEAR.

5. (S) AMBASSADOR VOLPE INDICATED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO
EXPLAIN THIS MOVE TO THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD
HAVE TO BE HANDLED CAREFULLY. HE STATED THAT HE HAD EXCELLENT
RAPPORT WITH THE COGNIZANT MINISTERS WITH WHOM HE WOULD HAVE TO
DISCUSS THE PROPOSAL. THIS HE PROPOSED TO DO. HE STRESSED,
HOWEVER, THAT THERE COULD BE NO ACTION UNTIL AFTER THE JUNE
ELECTIONS.

6. (S) VR-24: DURING THE COURSE OF OUR DISCUSSION I RAISED
THE PLAN TO MOVE VR-24 FROM THE NAPLES AREA TO SIGONELLA. WE
REVIEWED THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL INVOLVED (APPROXIMATELY 470
MILITARY AND 1170 DEPENDENTS) AND ADDRESSED AMBASSADOR VOLPE'S
CONCERN ABOUT LOSS OF JOBS IN THE NAPLES AREA. HE POINTED OUT
THAT THE HIGH RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NAPLES WAS A DELICATE
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SITUATION AND THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO WORSEN
THE PROBLEM. I ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR THAT THERE WOULD BE NO
LOSS OF JOBS TO LOCAL NATIONALS IN THE NAPLES AREA. THE
APPROXIMATELY 40 ITALIAN WORKERS AFFECTED WILL BE ABSORBED BY
OTHER U.S. NAVY ACTIVITIES IN THE NAPLES AREA. THERE WILL BE
NO RIFS OR FIRING. NORMAL ATTRITION OVER TIME WILL EFFECT THE
NEEDED REDUCTIONS.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

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7. (S) I EXPLAINED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE MOVE WOULD NOT START UNTIL EARLY CALENDAR YEAR 1976. IT WOULD NOT COINCIDE WITH THE MOVE OF CTF 60 THIS SUMMER. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT SINCE THESE MOVES WOULD BE SOME MONTHS APART, THIS SHOULD BE HELPFUL AND THAT THE INFLUX OF CTF 60 PERSONNEL AND DEPENDENTS WOULD AT LEAST PARTIALLY COMPENSATE FOR VR-24'S LATER MOVE TO SIGONELLA.

8. (S) THE AMBASSADOR ASKED ME TO REVIEW OUR EXCHANGE WITH THE GOI ON THE MOVE TO SIGONELLA TO SEE IF THE PLAN APPROVED BY THE GOI IN MARCH 1972 INCLUDED REFERENCES TO THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED. EXTRACTS FROM OUR FILES HAVE BEEN SENT TO EMBASSY ROME (MR. SILVA). IN THEM REFERENCES ARE MADE TO THE COMPOSITION OF VR-24 BY AIRCRAFT TYPES AND SPECIFIC NUMBERS OF AIRCRAFT AND TO THE SPECIFICS OF OUR 26 MILLION DOLLAR CONSTRUC-TION PROGRAM. NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE NOT ADDRESSED SPECIFIC BUT PERSONNEL/DEPENDENT SUPPORT FACILITIES FROM PART OF THE GOI APPROVED CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM.

9. (C) COMMENT: THE ISSUES ARE NOW IN THE HANDS OF AMBASSADOR VOLPE WHO WILL MAKE THE NECESSARY CONTACTS. WE SHOULD DO NOTHING UNTIL WE HEAR FURTHER FROM THE MABASSADOR.
END TEXT.VOLPE

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